

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

OMB-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /078 W

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R 170900Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8899

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1770

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: STRIKE BREAKERS EVICT TONGA PROTESTERS FROM BUILDING

REF: (A) SEOUL 1727; (B) SEOUL 1689

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, AT 3:30 A.M. MARCH 17, TONGA ILBO MANAGEMENT BROUGHT AN ESTIMATED 200 STRIKEBREAKERS INTO TONGA OFFICE BUILDING TO FORCIBLY EVICT APPROXIMATELY 160 PROTESTING NEWSMEN INTO STREETS. STRIKEBREAKERS REPORTEDLY USED CLUBS, ROCKS AND HAMMERS TO BREAK INTO OFFICES. RELIABLE US MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SOURCES REPORT THAT 24 REPORTERS WERE EVICTED FROM NEWSROOM, 83 FROM THIRD FLOOR, AND 60 FROM RADIO STATION ON FOURTH FLOOR. (24 OF THIS GROUP HAD BEEN ON HUNGER STRIKE.) ONLY TWO OR THREE NEWSMEN WERE REPORTED INJURED BUT MORE WERE HOSPITALIZED, POSSIBLY AS RESULT OF HUNGER STRIKE. PREVIOUS RUMORS THAT LARGE NUMBER OF REPORTERS HAD BEEN RETURNING TO WORK AT WEEK'S END, PRIOR TO THE PRE-DAWN RAID NOW APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATED. (REFTEL A.)

2. PRESS REPORTS CLAIM STRIKEBREAKERS WERE TONGA NEWSPAPER VENDORS AND DISTRIBUTION PERSONNEL, BUT MILITARY SOURCES REPORT GROUP WAS VERY WELL DISCIPLINED AND THESE SOURCES
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BELIEVE AT LEAST SOME WERE ACTUALLY PLAINCLOTHES POLICE.

SINCE GROUP OPERATED DURING STRICT CURFEW HOURS, RUMORS ABOUND THAT RAID WAS ACCOMPLISHED WITH AT LEAST CONNIVANCE OF ROKG.

3. IN AFTERMATH, KOREAN JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION (KJA) TOLD PRESS THAT ENTIRE TONGA SITUATION IS RESULT OF JOINT EFFORT BY TONGA MANAGEMENT AND ROKG AND DEMANDED MANAGEMENT REINSTATE FIRED WORKERS. TONGA STRIKERS ALSO TOLD PRESS THAT ROKG WAS BEHIND NOT ONLY ADVERTISING IMBROGLIO BUT RESULTANT ACTIVITIES AS WELL. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DURING RECENT INTERPELLATION SESSIONS AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, HOWEVER, REPEATED EARLIER CLAIM THAT THEY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ENGINEERING ADVERTISING BAN AT TONGA.

4. MARCH 17 EDITION OF TONGA APPEARED ON TIME. "SYMPATHY ADVERTISING", HOWEVER, APPEARED GREATLY REDUCED IN THIS EDITION. WHETHER THIS IS MANAGEMENT DECISION OR SIMPLY REFLECTS CHANGE IN ATTITUDES IS UNCLEAR.

5. ROKG OFFICIAL QUOTING KCIA SOURCE TOLD EMBOFF THAT PRIMIN THROUGH INTERMEDIARY HAD SENT WORD TO TONGA ILBO PUBLISHER KIM SANG-MAN THAT ROKG PREPARED TO CALL OF ADVERTISING BOYCOTT AND REFRAIN FROM INTERFERING IN PAPER'S EDITORIAL AND NEWS POLICY, IF KIM PREPARED TO REMOVE LEADERS OF REPORTERS' UNION WHOM ROKG CONSIDERED CHIEF TROUBLEMAKERS. AT SAME TIME SAME SOURCE SAID THAT TONGA PUBLISHER'S DECISION TO DEAL HARSHLY WITH STRIKERS NOT ENTIRELY FORCED BY ROKG, BUT REFLECTS HIS OWN DECISION TO PREVENT LOSING CONTROL OF PAPER TO INCREASINGLY MILITANT AND INDEPENDENT STAFF.

6. COMMENT: WHILE WE MAY NEVER KNOW WHOLE TRUTH BEHIND TONGA AFFAIR, IT OBVIOUS THAT PAPER HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO SEVERE GOVT PRESSURE AND THAT PUBLISHER KIM SANG-MAN HAS BEEN RENDERED MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SUCH PRESSURE BECAUSE OF HIS OWN DIFFICULTIES IN RETAINING CONTROL OF EDITORIAL POLICY IN FACE OF STAFF MILITANCY.
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